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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NIAMEY 000176

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [NG](#)

SUBJECT: Large Rally Cheers Junta in Niamey; CFDR Issues Statement

1. On the morning of February 20, large crowds gathered in Niamey in response to the opposition collation (Coordination of Forces for Democracy and the Republic - CFDR) call for a public rally in support of the junta, the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSRD), that forcibly seized power on the afternoon of February 18. An estimated 20,000 people participated in the event (see photos attached), which clogged downtown streets for hours. The participants were jubilant, and brought home-made signs showing both support for the armed forces and noting that those who supported to prolongation in power of President Tandja ("tazarchists" - meaning those who support a continuation of power in Hausa).

2. The CFDR released on February 19 the following statement regarding the sudden change of events (informal Embassy translation):

(Begin text)

Since Thursday, February 18, 2010, Niger has lived under a regime of exception following the interruption by the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSRD) of the adventure of the 6th Republic.

This major event occurs at a moment when Niger has been experiencing an acute political crisis since the anti-constitutional referendum of August 4, 2009 that emerged from the denial of the democratic process and Mamadou Tandja's intentions to impose a unilateral constitutional change.

The demolition of the government institutions and the partial suspension of the constitution are based on the logic of establishing a despotic order that is contrary to the rule of law.

The Nigerien people, attached to democratic values that they had patiently acquired during the last 20 years, strongly opposed this authoritarian confiscation of their sovereignty.

The crisis, having been put underway, resulted in ECOWAS appointing a mediator in order to open an inclusive political dialogue.

However, the government delegation used all sorts of delaying maneuvers to make the dialogue fail.

The PM's last media appearance, on Wednesday, February 17, 2010 has finally convinced Nigeriens that the government will never engage on the path of a peaceful resolution of the political crisis that shakes our country.

For all these reasons, the CFDR welcomes with relief the end of the 6th Republic, a Republic which is illegal and illegitimate.

The CFDR welcomes the end of the 6th Republic with all the more relief that the defunct regime wanted to force democratic forces to fight it on the only field that it has chosen, that is, confrontation and violence.

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This violence, we are convinced, would have led our country into a situation, which, over time, would carry danger and serious threats for its stability and that of the sub-region.

The CFDR takes good note of the declaration of the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy, in particular, the will it expressed to make Niger return to democracy and good governance.

The CFDR encourages the CSRD in its decision to bring back Niger to a normal constitutional life after a democratic transition, which would be essentially devoted to the development and the adoption of a consensual constitution on the one hand, and the organization of free and transparent general elections on the other hand.

The CFDR invites its supporters and all sincere patriots to a march in support for the restoration of democracy on Saturday, February 20, 2010 all around the country.

Long live the CFDR, long live democracy, long live Niger!

(End text)

3.Comment: The CFDR, which has engaged in fruitless negotiations with the Government of Niger side, seems highly motivated to develop a modus operandi with the CSRD to pursue a reinvigorated democracy following the political downturn of the past year, wherein President Tandja refused to relinquish power on December 22, 2009, the end of his second and final term in office under the 1999 constitution. End comment.  
WHITAKER